

tiny, Roberts portrayed the United States as the world's "great dispenser of knowledge, light & liberty" (p. 77). In America, "the masterpiece of creation," everything reached "its highest extent" (p. 209). Roberts also commented on Ohio's internal improvements, especially railroad building.

A homespun philosopher, the somewhat melancholy Roberts pondered the meaning of life, death, and immortality. Frequently attending revivals and camp meetings, he found that the various denominations offered only incomplete answers to life's basic questions. Rather than hell and damnation, religion should unite the believer with the universal higher power, a benevolent "Supreme Architect."

Writing on the eve of the Civil War in 1859, Roberts revealed strong antiblack and anti-abolitionist prejudices. Believing that blacks should be cleared from the Ohio country, he attacked abolitionism at Oberlin College and in the Republican party. He supported Stephen A. Douglas's popular sovereignty and wanted the Fugitive Slave Law rigorously enforced. During the Civil War Roberts was exempted from service because of ill health. He supported General George B. McClellan against Abraham Lincoln in the election of 1864; however, he strongly denied accusations of being a Copperhead, a southern sympathizer. During Reconstruction he supported President Andrew Johnson against the Radical Republicans.

Recording local people's marriages and births, deaths and funerals, affairs and quarrels, successes and failures, Roberts's diary is a prose version of Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*. A keen observer of life, Roberts describes the sicknesses that ravaged the frontier—fever, ague, milk sickness, dropsy, consumption, smallpox, and alcoholism. As he records the deaths of relatives, friends, and neighbors, he provides a brief assessment of their character and contributions.

Buckeye Schoolmaster is recommended for readers interested in local, educational, social, and political history.

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An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay's Interviews and Essays. Edited by Michael Burlingame. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996. Pp. xix, 167. Notes, index. \$29.95.)

Michael Burlingame has assembled and edited a handful of oral interviews conducted by President Abraham Lincoln's wartime private secretary, John G. Nicolay, in the 1870s and 1880s in the course of collecting materials for his and John Hay's ten-volume biography of Lincoln. Also included in Burlingame's collection are two essays that

Nicolay prepared for publication but failed to sell to the newspapers, "Lincoln in the Campaign of 1860" and "Some Incidents in Lincoln's Journey from Springfield to Washington." As the editor notes, Nicolay, wisely questioning the accuracy of memories sometimes forty or more years old, ultimately did not use the interviews in the biography. However, numerous fragments from them appeared in other works, including *Personal Traits of Abraham Lincoln* (1919) by his wife, Helen Nicolay. These accounts are familiar to scholars conversant with the stories and anecdotes about Lincoln's life. Indeed, some of Nicolay's interview subjects told the same stories to other biographers who incorporated them into their works. For his volume Burlingame "translated" the interviews from Nicolay's shorthand notes, which seldom if ever have been viewed by Lincoln scholars.

Nicolay interviewed Lincoln's longtime friends and colleagues from his years in Springfield, Illinois, and also his tenure as president. Included were Lincoln intimates Orville H. Browning, John T. Stuart, William Butler, Ward Lamon, and Leonard Swett and political allies such as Lyman Trumbull, John Sherman, Joseph Holt, Hannibal Hamlin, and James Speed. Interviews with two Indians, John P. Usher of Terre Haute and Godlove S. Orth of Lafayette, also appear in this volume. It is evident from the interviews and his notes that Nicolay solicited stories and anecdotes showing Lincoln's greatness, generosity, compassion, and morality. He chose his interviewees well and was not disappointed. Numerous such stories were recounted. But Orville Browning's 1875 interview, the first in the book, provides in Burlingame's view "startling new information" (p. xvi) about Lincoln's strange bout with depression in 1841 brought about by his engagement to his future wife, his simultaneous infatuation with another woman, and his realization of the marital mess he was about to get into. Browning spoke of Lincoln's "constitutional melancholy" and "derange[ment]" (pp. 1-2) during that time. He also noted that the president "always had these spells of melancholy. I have frequently found him in Washington in these very moods" (p. 3). But the senator concluded on a happier note that Lincoln "was born for better things" and knew he was to undertake "some important predestined labor or work" (pp. 6-7). The sentiments expressed in these last quotations characterize the majority of the interviews presented.

As is lamentably the norm in academic publishing today, endnotes supplant footnotes in this book. The reader is required to flip back and forth frequently between text and notes. The one advantage of endnotes over footnotes is the freedom they allow the author to delve at length into explanations of the text. However, numerous points raised in the texts of the interviews do not receive the notation that is due them, and in a few cases the notes that appear are wrong. For example, Julia Jayne's dates are 1823-1868, not 1830-1877 (p. 140). Likewise, Senator Thomas Hart Benton's dates are 1782-1858,

not 1816–1879 (p. 143). Also, more explanation of the “translation” required to read Nicolay’s difficult shorthand is in order; a photograph of one of the shorthand texts would have been helpful. These quibbles aside, Lincoln scholars and enthusiasts will appreciate and enjoy this brief work.

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On Shaky Ground: The New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811–1812. By Norma Hayes Bagnall. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996. Pp. xii, 114. Illustrations, maps, appendices, index. Paperbound, \$8.95.)

About two hundred earthquakes occur every year in the central United States, the vast majority of them not sensed by people. The most powerful earthquake in the region in the last one hundred years occurred in 1968 and centered on the Wabash Valley Fault in southeastern Illinois. Few earthquakes in the recorded history of North America, however, can compare to the violent earthquakes of 1811–1812 in southeastern Missouri. They are the subjects of Norma Hayes Bagnall’s book.

The author’s first goal—undertaken in the first half of the book—is to tell the story of what happened to people, their communities, and the landscape during and after those winter months of 1811–1812. Using eyewitness accounts and contemporary reports, Bagnall reveals the terror of the people and the devastation of their society and land. It is a difficult task to reconstruct environmental disasters, for there is a tendency to emphasize the most spectacular and egregious, which makes for gripping storytelling but is done at the expense of what happened to most people and most of the land. Not much new is presented in this first part of Bagnall’s work, but a wealth of information is provided in a truly engaging style. The author refrains from delving into geophysical explanations for the earthquakes.

A second goal—in the second half of the book—is to comment on what the future might hold for the seismic region. Included are discussions of earthquake predictions and preparations. National attention focused on New Madrid on December 3, 1990, when a scientist predicted an enhanced chance for an earthquake. Even though none occurred, the prediction and its associated media event alerted people to the reality that they live “on shaky ground.” Scientists have divided the region into zones of intensity of earthquake damage. The map of damage in 1811–1812 (p. 65) shows the zone of “devastating” damage extending up the Ohio valley to Evansville, Indiana, and the zone of “destructive” damage extending northeastward up the Wabash valley past Indianapolis. Virtually all of Indiana falls within the zone